

AN
IMPARTIAL INQUIRY
INTO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF
RELIGION in ENGLAND:

RECOMMENDED TO THE
SERIOUS CONSIDERATION
OF
CHRISTIANS
OF
EVERY DENOMINATION.

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IMPARTIAL INQUIRY, &c.

EVERY thinking man will allow, that both present and eternal happiness is only to be secured by religion; that it is in this alone, we have a remedy for all the evils, to which human nature is subject. It therefore follows, that the proper business of every man in this life, is the attainment of it; and that every other concern is to be made subservient to this. Is it not then melancholy to observe, that the practice of mankind in general, is just the reverse of this?—That among all the concerns of life, there is none less attended to than religion; so that were we to judge of it's importance, from the attention we see paid to it, we should be apt to conclude it to be one of the most trifling and

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indifferent things in the world ;—a thing, that might be neglected without any bad consequence.

And how many and plausible are the apologies that are made for such a conduct ?—One, which is very commonly made, is, that the number of different religions in the world, makes it impossible to judge of the right ; especially as every party is stiffly maintaining, and labouring to prove, that theirs is the true one ; and all appear to have argument on their side. I believe there is nothing more frequently urged by irreligious persons, in defence of their conduct, than this, and perhaps they have nothing more plausible ; yet, I am persuaded, if we sift this to the bottom, it will be found a mere pretext, to excuse an ungodly life, and slothful disposition. For, how can a reasonable man suppose it consistent, either with the wisdom or goodness of God, to give a revelation of his will to mankind, as the rule of their faith and practice, in such terms as they could not easily understand,

stand, and only calculated to breed confusion. Let it then be understood, that by Religion, I mean, that of the Bible, as distinguished from the Mahometan and Pagan Religions; the divine origin of which book, has been proved by many able writers, both from it's external and internal evidences, to the confusion of every learned infidel, that has ever attempted to dispute it; and to the satisfaction of every serious and candid inquirer.

Of this religion then, I purpose in the first place, to give a plain scriptural account; and then,

Secondly, To inquire, how far it may be said to exist, amongst the various denominations of Christians in this kingdom.

Now of religion, I would observe first in general, that it is the will of God revealed to men, of the way and manner, in which he chooses to be worshipped; which, in one word, is by imitating him in all his imitable

perfections: so that, as there is only one God, there can be only one Religion. There can no more be a plurality of religions, than God can have a plurality of wills. And what can be more plainly revealed than this,—one religion, both in the Old and New Testaments?

Suppose we begin with the account given of it, in the words of the great Prophet of the Jewish Church, as recorded in *Deut. vi. 4*, and *Lev. xix. 18*.—*Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*—And our Lord reciting these words, in answer to one who asked him, which is the greatest commandment, observes, there is no greater commandment than these. This account of religion is further confirmed to us, by the concurring testimony of the inspired writers; and a very particular, and most excellent one is given us by St. Paul, in the thirteenth chapter of his
first

first Epistle to the Corinthians ; where he shows, that the greatest degree of knowledge, the most exalted gifts, even that of prophecy itself, with the greatest show of outward religion, even the giving all our goods to feed the poor, and our body to be burned, rather than renounce our profession,—if we have not this divine, inward principle, it will profit us nothing :—we may indeed be highly esteemed of men, but odious in the sight of God.—Where this divine principle exists, it will always exert itself in all works of piety towards God, and in works of charity towards our neighbour. And as this alone will make our outward works pleasing in the sight of God, it is this only, that can make them pleasant to ourselves.

This is that work of God in the soul, which our Saviour terms being born again, and St. Paul, a new creation, and being renewed in the spirit of our minds ;—because, a man is then changed from what he was by nature, namely, from having a carnal mind, which
was

was enmity against God, and goodness,—to love God, and whatever bears any relation to him.

I believe, few will say, that this is not a plain, scriptural account of religion, or that it is not a very desirable thing to be possessed of; because, so far as it prevails in the soul, it will banish whatever has a tendency to make men miserable. Restless desires, painful fears, either of present or future evils; uneasy passions, that harrow up the soul; all are subdued, as far as religion prevails therein.

*Soft peace she brings wherever she arrives,
She builds our quiet as she forms our lives;
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each breast a little heaven.*

Perhaps some will say, we do not, we cannot object to this religion, but it is far above our reach; we cannot attain unto it. No, indeed, you cannot by your own natural power or ability; neither does God require this
of

of you. But if you consult his word, you will there find the way to attain it, is made as plain as the thing itself.

How can this be more plainly taught, than in the words of the great Prophet of the Christian Church, with which he opens his mission :—*The kingdom of heaven is at hand ; repent ye, and believe the Gospel.*—The kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God, as they are frequently used by the inspired writers, are only different phrases for the same thing,—namely, true religion ;—which is a fore-taste of, and the way to eternal glory. This plainly appears from the words of St. Paul, where he says,—*The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, (outward observances) but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.*—This is the religion I have described.

The way to attain it, according to our Lord's direction, is repentance and faith.—The demand of repentance being universal, implies universal guilt.—So St. Paul,—*God*
hath

hath concluded all under sin. A feeling sense of this,—namely of our sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness, so as to extort the cry,—*What must I do to be saved,*—joined with a hearty desire of being saved in the way that God hath appointed, is the repentance which is here demanded. This is the knowledge of our disease, which leads us to seek a cure. By faith we receive that cure,—namely, pardon for all our sins, and the renewal of our souls after the image of God. The procuring cause of this grace is, the merits of the death of Christ, whose blood only cleanseth from sin. The condition which God requireth of us is, a firm reliance upon this, which is termed faith. Then it is, that the burthen of sin is removed, and the weary and heavy-laden find rest. Then it is, that we love him, because he first loved us. Then it is, that we receive of his spirit, and are enabled to run the way of his commandments with delight and pleasure.

Before

Before I proceed any further, permit me to make the appeal to your own heart :—Does not your own conscience testify, that this is a plain scriptural account of religion ?—And that the way described to attain it, is equally plain and scriptural ?

Where then lies the difficulty so many complain of, of coming at the truth ?—Why here it lies :—First, in the want of a serious, inquisitive, teachable disposition :—Secondly, in leaving the pure fountain of truth for muddy streams ; the corrupt glosses and comments of men, by which many endeavour to accommodate the Scripture to their own way of thinking, and manner of life. Here is the ground of the confusion complained of. The perverseness of men, not the obscurity of the Scriptures. — For these are so plain in all essential points, that he who runs, may read. — But if this is the only religion of the Bible, who are they that make another ? Particular modes of worship, or opinions, whether right

or wrong, are no more religion, than a string of beads is religion.

Forms of worship, when most agreeable to the scripture plan, are only so far good, as they are used with a right intention;—namely, as means to obtain the end. But to mistake them for religion itself, is an egregious blunder indeed. And it is equally certain, that right opinions are no more religion, than forms of worship;—which is fully confirmed by the words of St. Paul.—*Though I have all knowledge, and understand all mysteries, and have not love, I am nothing.*

Having now executed the first part of my plan, in giving a plain scriptural account of religion, I have cleared the way for the second;—namely, to inquire, how far it may be said to exist among the several denominations of Christians in this kingdom?

And here I am well aware of the difficulty that attends me.—How hard it will be to
speak

speak plain truth, and not give offence!—The account I am about to give, is an humiliating one to each denomination, of whom I shall speak. I shall therefore very probably offend many of those, who have accustomed themselves to think very highly of their own sect. But whatever may be the event, I can truly say, I have no such intention. I only wish to show my countrymen, whose happiness is dear to me, that while they are neglecting religion, or substituting any thing in its place, they are seeking death in the error of their life. I have entitled my book an *impartial inquiry*, and must beg leave to be consistent with what I there profess; and permit me to say, that what I now write, is not mere conjecture, or hasty conclusions from superficial views, but the result of many years close attention, and calm consideration.

The most numerous body of Christians so called, are those who profess themselves members of the Church of England. And thus much must be said in behalf of that Church,

that the religion I have described, and the way of attaining it, are expressly taught in her Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies; of which every one may satisfy himself, who chooses to consult them. But how far are the lives and tempers of her members conformable to her doctrines?—Do the bulk of these love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves?—Nothing less:—They do not even pretend to it.—Nay, it is well if they do not account it mere enthusiasm and madness. So far from possessing this, they are not even seeking it. For how few are there among them, who are not living in open, known sin; that are not living either in some kind of injustice, lying, swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, sabbath-breaking, and other acts of wickedness!—Consequently, they cannot be said, either to repent, or believe the Gospel; so that, although they are Christians in name, they are perfect Heathens, both in heart and life.—But how is it with them in point of knowledge?—Do they not understand the principles of the religion they profess?—Are they

they not acquainted with the doctrines of their own Church?—Much the same as they are with the tenets of Confucius, or the doctrines of the Gymnosophists:—Converse with them about Christianity, and you will find, they know as much of the nature and design of it, as those to whom the word of God never came. Such, I fear, is the major part of our national Church!—But, still there are many, who are not thus corrupt in their manners; who are not only free from open vice, but are found exercising themselves in good works;—they feed the hungry, they cloathe the naked, and are constant in the use of the means of grace. I acknowledge there are many such, and cannot but pity their condition. I fear there are thousands, who being ignorant of God's righteousness, (that is, God's method of justifying sinners) are thus going about to establish a method of their own, as the ground of their acceptance with him.—If their righteousness is no deeper than this, it is still no more, if so much as the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Consequently,
they

they cannot see the kingdom of God.—Having spoken of the Laity of the Church of England, let us turn our thoughts to the Clergy, and try what we can discover of religion among them.—In what I have said respecting the Laity, I would not be understood that there are no exceptions to be made.

I believe there are some, and I charitably hope there are more than there appear to be. But in the course of many years, I have met with exceeding few. And thus much it is necessary to premise, respecting the Clergy, that what I now write, applies to the greater part of them, but not to every individual. — Respecting then the greater part of the Clergy, I am sorry to say, they neither preach nor live the Gospel.—Nay, it is to be feared, that it was never the design, either of themselves, or of those who set them apart for what is called Holy Orders. I will not say, that that maxim prevails universally ;—“ *If the boy is fit for nothing else, make him a parson.* ”— But supposing he was fit for something else,
was

was the glory of God, and the good of souls, the motive that induced either the parents or guardians to appoint, or him to accept the sacred office?—Was it not rather a genteel maintenance, and an easy and reputable employment?—Yet, nevertheless, when the solemn question is put at ordination,—*Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God, for the promoting of his glory, and edifying of his people?*—The answer is given in the affirmative.—What!—when you are conscious that the love of money, ease, or honour, is that which moves you?—What wonder that the curse of God should rest upon such persons, and all their ministrations, who dare thus affront God, by making merchandise of sacred employments?—If the leading motive, the intention be thus corrupt in any preacher, no wonder that his doctrines and manners are equally so.—Respecting the doctrines now taught by the greatest part of the Church Clergy:—It is quite contrary to the doctrines of the Church; which doctrines,
they

they have sworn to teach and defend. I instance first, in that of original sin, so strongly set forth by the Church in her ninth article. This is either totally denied, or but partially acknowledged;—for, when do we find them faithfully declaring to men their fallen condition, both from the favour and image of God, which lays the foundation for that repentance, which never needs to be repented of?—Secondly, in the doctrine of justification by faith, contained in the eleventh article.—Instead of which, they maintain, that our justification is by our own works, which must be previous to it. Herein they discover their total ignorance of man's condition by nature, and of the whole œconomy of the Gospel way of salvation.

The doctrine of the new birth is also greatly misrepresented. By them, this is represented, as being only an outward thing,—namely, water, baptism, and outward reformation. But the Church, more consistent with the Scripture, shows it to be such a change of heart,

heart, as I have already described ;—that is, an inward change, from inward sin to inward holiness. Indeed, these grand points, so essential to Christianity, are seldom introduced by them ; for truly, they do not seem to know what to make of them.

Instead of these, we generally have substituted a little dry morality, hardly equalling in sublimity, that of Seneca or Epictetus ; and the manner of dispensing it equally dull with the subject. Who can wonder then, that none are awakened by such preaching, to a sense of their sinfulness and helplessness ; that the people are overwhelmed with ignorance and vice, or deluded with a vain conceit, that a negative goodness is all that God requires of them ; resting in the form, without the power of godliness ?—Of such a poor, fallen Church, may it not be said ;

But does she still exist in more than sound ?

The Church !—Alas ! where is she to be found ?

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*Not in the men, however dignify'd,
 Who would her Creeds repeal, her Laws deride ;
 Her Pray'rs expunge ; her Articles disown ;*
 And thrust the filial Godhead from his throne ;
 Yet still maintain their Antichristian plea,
 And cry, ' The Temple of the Lord are we !'*

How is the fine gold become dim ?—How is our wine mixed with water ?—Where is the zeal and disinterested love of our forefathers, who loved not their lives unto death, but gave them to the flames, in defence of these truths, and of pure and undefiled religion ; and in the midst of their sufferings, crying out,—“ *I resign my life with joy, in testimony of the doctrine of Jesus ?*”—Where are the successors of those pious men, whose lives were a living sermon ; a true picture of the truths they taught ?—Where are the pastors, who now can say,—*I have coveted no man's silver,*
 or

* Witness the applications that have been made to Parliament, to set aside subscription to the Articles.

or gold, or apparel; I have with-held from you nothing which was profitable, but have preached to you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house.—Yea, I have not shunned to declare to you the whole council of God;—to warn every one night and day with tears;—and to teach you humility, and charity,† both by example and precept.

How striking is the contrast between the old pastors, whose practice is thus recorded in the twentieth of the Acts, and that of our moderns!—Who now visits from house to house, unless it be for tithes and offerings?—But why not to inquire how their precious souls prosper; and whether the fear and worship of God are kept up in their families?—Alas! there is no time for this!—Cards, and plays, assemblies, and genteel visits, (if not hunting

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† How widely different to this, is the practice of many of our present Clergy; who, although possessing abundance, are frequently commencing law-suits with their poor parishioners about small tithes: By which, they contribute much to make themselves odious!

and racing) leave no room for this.—Unhappy men ! when God makes inquisition for blood, where will you appear ?—Do you never consider, that you are accountable to God for the souls, of which you have taken the charge ? And that if they perish through your neglect, God will require them at your hand ?

Having taken a review of our national Church, which affords us a sad spectacle of the state of religion in her ; we will now turn our eyes to the several denominations of Dissenters ;—only confining ourselves to those, whose numbers appear to be considerable.

One of the most considerable of them for numbers, are, those who are stiled Independents ; who, if we except their opinions about Church-government, and the form of worship, the difference in points of doctrine, between them and the Church, is very small.—They maintain, that the essence of religion, is the love of God, and our neighbour ;—and that this is only attainable by faith in Christ ;—and
that

that it is also necessary, in order to this, a man should be convinced of his total alienation from God by nature, and come to him through Christ for mercy, in his own proper character ;—namely, that of a guilty, hell-deserving sinner.

These are the doctrines maintained in their Catechisms, and books of instruction ; and these are the doctrines I have described, as maintained by the Church. And thus much must be said in behalf of their teachers, that the major part of them do maintain their doctrines, although there are some exceptions to be made among them.

It must also be acknowledged, that there are some pious men among them ;—men, who live as well as preach the Gospel ; and are in this respect, examples to their flocks :—And that the effect of this is visible in their congregations. But still, what a number of exceptionable things, are there to be found among them also.

Is

Is not that root of bitterness, the want of a pure intention, in undertaking the sacred office of preaching, to be found in many of their preachers?—Hence it is, that although the judgment may be better informed, the heart and life, and the success of their ministrations, are no better than many of the Church Clergy. For, the knowledge of the truth will still profit nothing, if it is held in unrighteousness.—Therefore, what I have said of the Church Clergy, will apply to these also.

Another material hurt to this community, is the violent attachment of many of their teachers to rigid Calvinism:—making the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, the whole of their theme. By which means, what they build with one hand, they pull down with the other. These are continually asserting, in spite of common sense,—that when God says, “ he willeth not the death of a sinner, but had rather that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, ” and

“and be saved,”—he does not mean all, nor even the greatest part, but only a very small number.—That when he says, “he is loving to every man, and that his mercy is over all his works,”—he does but dissemble; for he really hates the greatest part of them, and had consigned them to eternal misery, before they were born.

It is in vain that we represent to them, how repugnant this doctrine is to the tenor of Scripture, and the ideas we must necessarily form of the wisdom, justice, mercy, and goodness of God. The Scriptures, we are told, must not be understood as they appear to us, but according to the limits of this doctrine.

It is in vain also that we represent to them, the horrid consequences with which this doctrine is fraught;—particularly, the making the Son of God, one of the greatest dissemblers that ever existed:—Mocking his creatures with sham offers of mercy, which he knew they could not accept, and he never intended
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for them ;—then piteously weeping over them, and telling them, he would have gathered them, but they would not ;—and last of all, formally judging and condemning them, for what they could not help.

Now would not such preachers do well to consider, that this is not the method of preaching, adopted by Christ and his Apostles, whose offers of salvation are always general and unlimited, upon the conditions of repentance and faith, which all men through the preventing grace of God may perform : And that the destruction of sinners, is never by them attributed to any other cause, than the non-performance of these conditions.

But if it is in consequence of an unconditional decree, as they assert, then that is quite another cause ; and it is shameful prevarication to impute it to the former.

The effect of such preaching is but too obvious, which in some is dreadful security ;—
presuming

presuming upon God's mercy, with nothing more than dead faith, while the heart remains earthly, sensual, and devilish. In others, the effects are shocking licentiousness;—and in others, perfect indifference about any religion:—And although we may find here and there one who escapes the contagion, yet how small is their number!

Draw the parallel between the bulk of Independents and Churchmen, and how small is the difference, as to inward religion!—Are there many of the latter living in open vice?—So there are of the former.—Are there many of the one lovers of money, lovers of honour, and lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God?—So there are of the other.

Are there many Churchmen, who have the form of godliness without the power?—So there are Independents also:—So that the real difference, as to the bulk, is little more than a name.

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The next body of professors I would turn my thoughts to, are those denominated Presbyterians. With respect to some of these, I believe the difference between them and the Independents, is little more than that which respects the appointment of preachers ;—therefore, what I have said of the one, applies equally to the other also. But, respecting a considerable number of this community, the case is widely different. Some of them having embraced the doctrine of Arius, and others those of Socinius ;—from which they are denominated Arians and Socinians.

The sentiments and manners of these are so nearly allied, that there is no need that I should review them separately ;—as, what I say of the one, will apply to the other.

The doctrines maintained by these, are, that Christ is a creature. From which principle, they are led to deny several other important doctrines of Christianity ;—particularly, that of the fall of man, from the favour
and

and image of God ;—and the atonement made by the death of Christ, for the sins of mankind. The effect of which principles, is, that men are no longer taught to consider themselves as fallen, guilty creatures, by nature, children of wrath, without righteousness, and without strength ; but endued with such powers, as shall enable them to do whatever is needful, to recommend them to the divine favour.

And thus it happens, when men have been led through pride, to set up reason above revelation, and not to receive the Scriptures as the standard of truth. Indeed, it is then no wonder that they should run into these, or greater absurdities. For then, if reason will not have it so, Christ shall neither be God, nor satisfy divine justice. It is then in vain, (as a certain writer remarks) “ That
 “ we plead in behalf of the former, that the
 “ Scripture affirms, he is the Lord from heaven :—That he hath laid the foundations of
 “ the earth, and that the heavens are the

“ works of his hands.—And that the most
 “ distinguishing characters of the Almighty
 “ are ascribed to him, as he is God over all,
 “ blessed for ever, Alpha and Omega, the
 “ first and the last :—And the incommunicable
 “ title of Jehovah is attributed to him, with
 “ the same frequency and indifference, as to
 “ the Father himself.—It will be in vain to
 “ insist upon his character, as that he was a
 “ person, far from usurping any undue ho-
 “ nours ;—who yet maintained his unity with
 “ the Father, in the face of his enemies, and
 “ also died for bearing testimony, to the truth
 “ of his being the Son of God.”—All this,
 and much more shall be denied, if reason
 cannot comprehend it.

Some of these gentlemen have a short way
 of getting rid of every text, that makes against
 their favourite scheme, by calling it's autho-
 rity in question.—Thus, a short time back-
 ward, when one of them was pressed with the
 prayer of dying Stephen, as an argument for
 the divinity of Christ, he made no scruple to
 say,

say, it was an interpolation ;—and another modestly told me, he never thought Stephen clear in the divinity.—Now, if pure and undefiled religion is found to exist in any degree among these people, I think it cannot be imputed to the purity of their doctrine. Wherever then we turn our eyes, to look for Gospel, truth, and Christian righteousness, it must not be with them !

Let us next turn our attention to those, who are called Anabaptists.—These, I believe, are far less numerous, than either the Independents or Presbyterians. But, small as they are, they are far from being unanimous in their sentiments, unless in stiffly maintaining the doctrine of adult baptism by immersion, to be the only true baptism. I believe there are no people upon earth of equal number, who entertain a greater variety of opinions :—Some of these are rigid Calvinists ;—others are rigid Arminians ;—some are Arians ;—and some Socinians :—And what seems to characterise this sect is, an uncommon itch for disputing

puting upon unessential points. Hence it is, that we find them not only disputing with all the world, but also frequently disputing with one another. And the effects of this are just such as might be expected;—as nothing is more likely to destroy peace, humility, and love, than a constant wrangling about opinions. So that whatever exceptions we may make here in behalf of some individuals, of both preachers and people, who have the loving fear of God in their hearts, and his glory in view, it is far from being a general case.—And what I have said of the bulk of the foregoing denominations, may be said of these also.

But does not religion flourish among the people called Quakers?

If we may rely upon the testimony of respectable witnesses, it did once.—It is said, they once were a people filled with love, meekness, and humility;—patiently doing and suffering the will of God, and testifying
against

against an ungodly world, and bearing persecution with unshaken firmness.—I will not now enter into any discussion of their opinions:—If they will persist, that the Scriptures are to be understood only in a mystical sense, let them abound in their own wisdom. But, do their spirit and practice now correspond with that of their ancestors?—Should they say so, their own hearts would condemn them.—The sincere part of them will acknowledge it does not. For, although their outward deportment in general, may be less exceptionable than many others, it is confessed, that a worldly spirit, (that is, an earthly, covetous spirit) has got the ascendancy over the greater part of them; and that a regular sort of luxury and softness is equally conspicuous among them.—A certain writer observes,—“ That it is easy
 “ to discern how this people fell into this snare
 “ of the devil.—They were at first a poor,
 “ despised, afflicted people; then, what some
 “ of them had to spare was little enough, to
 “ relieve the needy members of their own
 “ society. In a few years they increased in
 “ goods,

“ goods, and were able to relieve more than
 “ their own poor. But they did not bestow
 “ what they had to spare from them on the
 “ poor of other societies ;—it remained either
 “ to lay up, or expend it in superfluities.—
 “ Some chose the one way, and some the
 “ other.” So that here also we can only make
 a few exceptions, and place the rest with those
 who are Christians in name only.

But, is there any thing exceptionable among the Methodists ;—the people who have risen and multiplied in our land in a short time, so as nearly to equal in number, those of any denominations of Dissenters ? — In speaking of these also, it is necessary to make a distinction,—namely, between those who are properly, and those who are improperly called Methodists. Those who are properly called Methodists, are the followers of Mr. John Wesley ; to whom, with his brother, the late Mr. Charles Wesley, and some of their associates, the name was first given at Oxford, in the year 1729.—Not for any particular opinions they

they maintained, but because of the regularity of their lives.

Those who are improperly called Methodists, are the followers of the late Mr. George Whitfield, who separated from them, in consequence of his embracing the Calvinistic doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation.

Of the latter I will speak in the first place, and then of the former.—Mr. Whitfield continued his labours about thirty-three years; and the success of his ministry in gathering large societies, is well known. His sentiments are those of the established Church, except in the above-mentioned instance; which, whether it is held by the Church, or not, has been ably disputed.*

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And

* See the Church of England vindicated from the Charge of absolute Predestination, by the Rev. Walter Sellon.

And thus much is certain, it was not the sentiment of some of our most eminent reformers, as their writings testify. Particularly those truly great and good men, Bishops Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper.—Mr. Whitfield was greatly supported by the present Countess of Huntingdon, who made him her Chaplain, and by other great personages; who, after his death, (which happened in the year 1770) have greatly exerted themselves in supporting the same cause,—particularly in training up and supporting preachers; by which means, their number has been greatly augmented,—particularly in and about London. That there are many truly pious persons among these people, cannot be disputed;—but, that the major part are such, may be questioned.—One great cause of which may be owing to their violent attachment to Calvinism, which will ever more or less lead to Antinomianism.—Hence I apprehend it is, that we see so much conformity to the world, in its spirit and customs among these also.

Their

Their violent attachment to the peculiarities of Calvinism, led them in the year 1771, to make a violent attack upon Mr. John Wesley, for some minutes of a conference which he published, containing some Anti-Calvinistic propositions. This gave rise to one of the greatest contests on that point, that perhaps has happened since the meeting of the Synod of Dort;—in which, the whole force of Calvinistic logic was displayed, by the several champions of that party:—all which was withstood by the single pen of Mr. John Fletcher,—whose great erudition, strong understanding, sound judgment, manly eloquence, and exalted piety, which ever kept his mind undisturbed, joined together in the cause of truth which had been obscured, gave him a vast superiority over his opponents.—So that, after a contest of about five years, the Calvinists fairly quitted the field, although they did not stoop to own themselves vanquished. In this contest, Calvinism was torn up by the roots, and not a single twig left for

it to hang upon, unless in the obstinacy, credulity, or inattention of it's votaries.

Respecting the original Methodists, the followers of Mr. John Wesley, we must acknowledge, that if religion does not flourish among his followers, the blame does not lie with him.

We have seen him indefatigable in his public labours for near fifty years ; and now, at the age of eighty-six, abating nothing of his labours and travels. Impartial in his attention, instructions, reproofs, and assistance of every kind, to all orders and ranks of men ; so that we may say, that in this respect, modern history has not furnished us with such an instance. His doctrines are those of the established Church, unmixed either with Calvinism, or Antinomianism :—his writings are concise, yet conspicuous in an eminent degree ;—and in these, as in his discourses from the pulpit, much is said in a little.

Good

Good discipline also, as far as he is able to enforce it, is also kept up in his societies.—From such an able, indefatigable preacher and manager, great things might be expected; and indeed, great things have been effected:—a great part of the nation has been aroused out of sleepy ignorance and inattention, and many thousands truly converted to God by his preaching, and those in connection with him. His followers throughout the three kingdoms, are computed at about sixty thousands, and those in America and the West-Indies, amount to many thousands more;—and respecting real religion, I am persuaded there is more among them, than can be found among any other people of equal number. But, does it exist in such a degree, as might have been expected from a people enjoying such singular advantages?—Let us hear Mr. Wesley himself on this head;—and as I have already observed, that impartiality is one great part of his character, so that which follows, in the account he gives of his own people, is a confirmation of it.—In one of his publications,
he

he says,—“ The world say, the Methodists are
 “ no better than other people ;—this is not
 “ true ;—yet it is nearer the truth than we
 “ are willing to imagine. For personal reli-
 “ gion, either towards God or man, is amaz-
 “ ingly superficial among us.—I shall but just
 “ touch upon a few generals.—How little
 “ faith is there among us !—How little com-
 “ munion with God !—How little living in
 “ heaven, walking in eternity, deadness to
 “ every creature !—How much love of the
 “ world, desire of pleasure, of ease, of praise,
 “ of getting money !—How little brotherly
 “ love !—What continual judging one ano-
 “ ther !—What evil speaking, what tale-bear-
 “ ing !—What want of moral honesty among
 “ servants and journeymen !—Which of them
 “ does his master as much work as he can ?—
 “ And who is there that does as he would be
 “ done by, in buying and selling ?—Family
 “ religion is also shamefully wanting in almost
 “ every branch.”—This account was given
 many years backward ;—but as the same lea-
 ven has been diffusing itself unto the present
 day,

day, so he has not been wanting to bear his testimony against it, both from the pulpit and the press, as may be seen in some of his later writings.—As the same causes generally produce the same effects, so we see it has happened in part to this community, as well as to others. When they were most poor and despised, then they appear to be most free from corruption, and most devoted to God.—But, as they have increased in worldly riches and esteem, so likewise in a worldly spirit. It was by these means, that the mystery of iniquity began to work in the Apostolic age, as we find by what St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians;—and by the same means, the Christian Church became corrupted in the days of Constantine the Great.

Nor can it be said, that the preachers among this people also, are free from corruption. For, although we acknowledge, that there are a number of pious, sensible men among them, whose only design is to promote the knowledge of God among men;—yet it is

is evident, there are many of a contrary character.

While they were poor, despised, and persecuted, there was little danger that any should enter upon that employment from worldly considerations.—But that barrier seems now removed :—A Methodist Preacher is now far better provided for than many a poor Church Curate ; nor are they any more exposed to the hardships they were formerly.

St. Paul, in writing to the Philippians, surprises us with a very strange account of his fellow-preachers ;—where he says, “ All seek “ their own things, not the things of Christ.” By which, I apprehend, he means, that the greatest part of them were seeking their own ease, honour, or temporal advantage, more than the glory of God, and the good of souls.—Therefore we ought not to wonder, should we find it so now.

And

And here lies one great cause of the corruption of Christian communities;—as such a disposition will ever lead them to connive at the vices of the rich, from whom they have expectations; and to neglect and despise the poor.—Yea, it is by these means, that at length ignorance and licentiousness overwhelm both preachers and people.

As the example and vigilance of St. Paul, were not sufficient to restrain this spirit in the preachers of his day;—so neither have the example and vigilance of Mr. Wesley;—which is evident from their impatience of restraint from him, and their restless endeavours to get congregations to themselves. That such a disposition prevails much among them, is further evident, from Mr. Charles Wesley's Letters to Mr. John, which are published in the Arminian Magazine, for July and August, 1789. That good man, it seems, was too much in the way of their ambitious views, and had, as well as his brother, lived too long for them.

F

Hence

Hence they were led to depreciate his talents, and envy the success of his ministry, as he there makes it evident.

He tells his brother, he thinks them in the greatest danger through pride; and that he has no alternative, but to conquer that spirit, or be conquered by it. He further represents their blindness to their own interests, in that they want a governor, not only to keep them together, but also to prevent them from tearing one another in pieces. — “Give them back,” says he, “their first poverty, and their first love, and they will not desire to reign without us.” One of themselves, an old experienced preacher, assured me, this assuming spirit so far prevailed, as to drive the best of their people from them.

It is also no small grievance to the discerning part of this community, as well as hurtful to their cause, that many are admitted as preachers among them, who are no ways equal to the undertaking;—whose incoherent rhapsodies

odies can serve no valuable purpose, but only tend to make the very name of preaching odious.

I judge it needless to take any particular notice of any other sects among us, as not having yet made any considerable progress;—and those I have already introduced, will serve as a sample of the whole.—And if this is a true state of religion among professors, (which I think no one will attempt to disprove) how loud then is the call for reformation among every denomination!—which, as it is the design of these pages to promote, so the writer will think himself peculiarly happy, if any is moved thereby to the laudable undertaking.

In this little tract it may be observed, I have touched upon opinions, only so far as I conceive they affect the essence of religion; which, how far it exists among us, is the one point of my inquiry. In opinions that do not interfere with this, let every man think and
let

let think ;—as uniformity in lesser matters, is a thing that can hardly be expected.—The call for a reformation among the professors of religion, is not only necessary in regard to themselves, but also with respect to their influence with others. Who does not know, that our land swarms with Deists, and men who profess no religion at all ?—Men, who neither believe the Bible, nor frequent any place of worship ?—and when reproved, is not the constant plea with which they defend themselves,—“ We do not see that the professors of religion are at all better than “ others ? ”—The very same weapon has been put into the hands of the Heathens abroad, as well as at home, who, when urged to embrace Christianity, have frequently asked what they shall gain, or what they shall be the better for becoming Christians ?—And truly, by embracing such Christianity, as they have been used to see exhibited in the lives of it's professors, their gains would be but small ;—nay, it is much if they would not be losers. For now perhaps, they neither swear, nor cheat,

cheat, nor get drunk, which they have observed the Christian men do.

But it is said, that religion has been much revived of late years among us. I have acknowledged that it has.—But still, what proportion does the real Christian bear to the nominal, and those who profess no religion at all ?

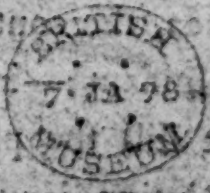
Suppose that there are half a million of real Christians in the nation ;—what is this, in comparison of six millions ?—So that, after all the exceptions that charity induces us to make, when we appeal to matter of fact, and consider the open vice practised by all orders of men,—the neglect, yea, the contempt of religion that is now predominant ;—impartiality obliges us to say, that still the proper characteristic of the English Nation, is ungodliness.

F I N I S.

and the other, which I have of-
ficed the same as a co-

But it is said, that nothing has been much
of late years, and I have no
doubt that it is so. — But what pro-
portion does the total Christian population bear to the
total, and those who profess no religion

It is said that there are half a million of total
Christians in the nation; — what is this, in
proportion to the millions? — To what after
the enormous numbers that already subject us to
taxes, when we apply to matters of fact, and
consider the open vice exhibited by all or-
ders of men — the nation, I suppose, is
in a position that is now before the
eyes of the nation, and we are to be
instructed of the English nation, in regard



the day, month and year—Yours truly—William L. Garrison

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DAVID AND JOHN



THE
"There shall be
TRINITY
this the 1st day."
Blood
Alcohol
God and Man

THE BATTLE OF ARMACINDON III

[illegible]